

Febr. 23, 1959

Art Kornberg -Biochemistry

Hello, Arthur:

Just a word of greetings from Stanford, now that we are more or less settled down now. After several weeks of motels, we finally rented a furnished house on campus (Prof.-em. Brand's) at 433 Gerona Road. We have an option on a Pine Hill Lot and will eventually strat building. My home phone is DA-3-3816; lab (Biophysics in the Hansen Labs area) is DA-3-2441. Everyone here has, of course, gone out of their way to be helpful; though Alway has been somewhat vague now and then about funds, everything seems to be coming along quite satisfactorily. Our rather large Genetics training grant has been tentatively approved, and we are mainly waiting for the center to be finished and for your arrival to get seriously under way.

We've abandoned (or postponed) our plans to take 3 months off in Italy this spring: it just looks impossible now. But I (we?) will be away from about May 15-June 10 to take in some meetings that involved firm obligations. Also I may be away a few days in early March for some space-biology business in Amsterdam.

We'd had some fine weather for a while, which was a balm to tired travellers; but the last ten days or so have been steady rain, usual for this time of year. We were momentarily anxious about all of you when we heard about the St Louis tornado; we trust all of you were well out of its path.

The temporary lab in Biophysics is working out, more or less well-- it is cramped. But on the whole, coming out here early was a wise decision, I think, and it will mean a much better working schedule this summer and fall. There is still a great deal of planning to do, and it's better done here than in Madison.

Len Herzenberg was out here last week to complete the discussion of his appointment. This seems satisfactorily settled, and he should be here in October to get our tissue-cell-genetics program under way. The next opening is either in mammalian or in human genetics and somewhat of a poser, since it does not seem probable that Crow or Mitchison or Cavalli cares to leave his present position just now. There just aren't very many well trained people working in mammalian genetics nowadays-- a situation our department should try to help remedy. One possibility in the very back of my mind, and it is problematical from several standpoints, is Elizabeth Russell from Bar Harbor. She is one of the outstanding figures in this field, but I don't ~~quite~~ know how much weight to place on her age and her still rather conventional outlook in genetics. Probably a wiser point of view would be that Stanford would be fortunate to have her, and it is a question whether we have what it takes (mainly space) to set her up properly as a center of mouse genetics. If you have any thoughts on these matters, you know I welcome your counsel.

Kretchmer as you know is already named as Pediatrician-- I hardly know how to evaluate his scientific standing. I knew him very well as a child, but hardly at all since then. The biggest question now is, I suppose, Irv London and whether Stanford will look as attractive to him as it does to us. One issue here is certainly space, and strong representations will be made to the trustees for Blank Building partly on his account, but there is another one in which you may play some part:

London says one of his chief motivations is the chance to develop academic medicine, which includes research training for some of his internists in basic sciences. I suspect he is rather concerned that your own perfectionism and aversion from clinical investigation might limit the advantages that such a superb Biochemistry Department might offer as part of the context for his interests. I think he does need assurance as to the extent of your own interest in his program. If you want to be instrumental in attracting the best people in the clinical departments, I think we have to offer something ourselves, and that is that the basic sciences will have some relation ~~them~~ to them. At the very least, I suppose the M.D. ought not to be held as prima facie evidence against the possible qualifications of a postdoctoral fellow to learn Biochemistry or Genetics. I was delighted to meet London myself, and can just hope we do get somewhere with him.

Psychiatry is moving along too— the search committee had a man called Branch out here (from Utah). I couldn't get a strong impression of him — he seems to have no strong convictions about any single approach to psychiatric mechanisms, and I don't know what particular contributions he has made or what standing he has in the field.

Have you reconciled yourself to Johnson for Chemistry here? I have heard only the best about his former student Djerassi who would apparently be part of the package. Djerassi will be out here next week and I look forward to meeting him. Just in case this tack does founder, I might suggest that you look at a man called Szwarc who is a polymer chemist and heads a chemistry department at Syracuse. (Some people I know there also think very highly of him.) I only happen to be interested in some of his work on polymers (cf. Chem Reviews 47:75; J. Chem. Phys. 29 No.2/); Nature, 178:1168) and physical chemistry of free radicals. Whatever more I know of him you'd find in American Men of Science.

For now,

As ever

Joshua Lederberg